

wood box! Never! I wish I was a girl, so I do!"

"Girls don't have to do anything!" exclaimed Grandma Stone, in surprise. "Well, well, well! You come with me a minute, Bobby, and we'll see if you are right."

Bobby followed grandmother into the sitting room. But when they got there both were surprised; for, sitting in the big rocker was Beth, her eyes full of tears.

"I wish I was a boy, same as Bobby!" she said, sorrowfully. "I'm tired as anything of dusting rooms. Boys don't have to dust, or mend stockings, or do anything! O, dear! dear! dear!" and Beth hid her curly head in the duster and sobbed.

"Well I never did!" exclaimed grandmother. "Supposing you do Bobby's work to-day, and he will do yours. I know that he will be delighted to change work with you."

But would you believe it? Grandmother was mistaken, for Bobby shook his head.

"I'm going to feed the hens myself!" he said, decidedly.

Beth wiped her eyes in a hurry. "Girls never fill wood boxes," she murmured.

Then they both laughed and stopped grumbling for that day. So you see grandmother's remedy was a wise one, after all.—
Our Sunday Afternoon.

My Father's House

My Father's House, not made with hands,
Above the empyrean stands:
Its esplanade's the Milky Way
Where up and down the angels stray:
Its rooms are jewelled with the stars,
With Saturn, Jupiter and Mars;
Its borders girt with crystal seas;
Its portico's the Pleiades;
Of fairest azure is its dome,
So splendid is my Father's Home!

My Father's House is also here
In this familiar lower sphere;
For Nature with its smiling grace
Is but the lighting of His face.
Confirmed is this divine belief
By every gently stirring leaf,
Or murmuring wavelet of the sea
Which bears a thought of God to me:
The rising of each new-born day
Proclaims my God's not far away.

But I must have Him nearer still
If welling joy my heart would fill,
For Him my inmost soul doth cry,
Star-girdled God, to me draw nigh!
My pray'r the King of Heaven hears,
In grace He at my side appears:
He comes and sups with me and mine
And of my heart He makes a shrine.
A mightier marvel could not be,
My Father's Home is now—in me!

—Charles A. S. Dwight, in *New York Observer*.

THE BEST OF GIFTS

JULIA SARGENT VISHER

Elizabeth Barton was in tears. This statement may not seem remarkable, but it is. Elizabeth was not given to tears, and the more excuse there seemed to be for them the less likely she was to seek their refuge. As a prairie home missionary's wife, she had learned to find or make a bright side to the most gloomy outlook. When that precious

first home of her bridal days was swept away in an autumn gale which took the prairie fire across unheard of spaces in its work of destruction, she had faced the future bravely, and in the long privation following had smiled in a brave attempt to imitate those wonderful early saints who she read, "took joyfully the spoiling of their goods." While her neighbors cowered in their cellars in dread of a threatening cyclone, she had faced the worst, still smiling at the thought of "stormy wind fulfilling His will." But to-day she did not smile. She wept over the fair and welcome contents of a costly express package from her Eastern home.

She knew how much love went with every gift. She knew, as the givers could not have known, how hungry her beauty-loving eyes had been to rest on just such fair and dainty things as were now unfolded, but all the more she wept. It seemed to her such a sad fate to be always receiving and never giving. How she would rejoice to send to her dear ones gifts as welcome as these; but that she could never hope to do, and she had no text for this occasion.

I suppose Elizabeth would not have given way in this childish manner if she had not thought herself safe from observation. But even the luxury of a study in the church—until the weather demanded a fire—could not shut out all worldly cares, and the home missionary had discovered his faithful horse entangled in her picket rope and had gone to her relief. Then what was more natural than to look into the cosy little home for just a word with the bright little woman he had left so busy with her new possessions half an hour before?

When the source of her grief had been unfolded, Elizabeth was given her text. It was the same dear old one that she had herself thought of bitterly, but with a new thought. Did she begrudge to her dear ones the best? Was she not willing to take the lesser joy of receiving that they might have the purer bliss of giving? What pleasure had gone into every plan and every purchase. What if there had been no one to send it? Then, too, if she could not give such gifts to them she could at least taste afresh the pleasure of "passing on." The lovely etching in its simple yet expensive frame could best hang where the pretty but cheap photograph had so long cheered her, and that picture would so brighten up the walls of the bare school-room. The lovely calender of choice quotations would make it easy to spare the much-loved, long-used wall roll to the lonely invalid she knew.

And, after all, was it not possible that she could give as much as she received? This hope came to her as the minister walked slowly back to his study revolving in his mind the text which had just come to him: "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?"

She was putting the new calender in its place when the thought for Christmas Day met her eye: "How rarely do we remember

that He whose birthday we set apart for the giving of gifts had no gift to give to anyone except Himself."

Could she give more of herself to the distant ones who loved her dearly and missed her sorely? Why not make a map of her little home for mother? She could then see just where the new picture hung and the one which had been her birthday gift. She could know from the position of the new rug in front of the homemade lounge how exactly it fitted in as the chosen for the place. Could she not with even her little skill make the surroundings so vivid that it would almost seem to the one who thought so often of that little far away-home, as she had seen it? There was grandmother, whose dear hands had knitted the fine, long-wristed mittens. Elizabeth was recalling not a week ago the childish days when grandma taught her how to knit, and at the same time engraved upon her memory many a grand old hymn and pleasant story of her own childhood. Had she half often enough let grandma know that she loved these memories? Brother Tom should know how useful his carved letter case would prove and how proud she was of his progress in manual training. She would also enliven her own next washing day by thinking out for him a rhymed version of their adventures on the way to that country wedding when they found a bridge burned and had to turn aside thru a Russian settlement and in vain ask their way in all the dead and alive languages at their command.

There little plans and several others were carried out in the weeks that followed. More and more Elizabeth tried to share the everyday joys and sorrows of her life with the dear distant ones, with the distinct gain that each felt the other nearer. "We look forward to your letters," her mother would often write. "You always have so much to tell us." "Christmas is coming," said her sister to a friend. "I shall receive half a dozen handsome cards, perhaps. Not one of them would be to me what a letter from the sender would be. But Elizabeth, tho she will not have money to buy me any gift, nor is any gift out there worth buying, if she had the money, will contrive some way to send me a precious bit of herself to which I quite look forward."—*The Advance*.

Growing Pains

"I think William suffered from growing pains this morning," said grandfather. "William is growing in grace, but it pains him very much sometimes."

"What is growin' in grace?" asked Oscar.

"Growing good; growing like Jesus," said grandfather.

"Did he grow this morning?"

"I am sure he did. He wanted very much to ride with me. He knew his little brother and he could not both go, as there was but one empty seat in the carriage. So he went out under the tree and thought something like this: 'I always have to give up to Oscar,